

P 281237Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5843
INFO SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
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UNCLAS LUSAKA 000564

DEPT FOR PRM/AFR MARY LANGE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREF](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#) [ZA](#)
SUBJECT: ZAMBIA PREPARING FOR 25,000 ZIMBABWEANS FLEEING SOUTH
AFRICAN VIOLENCE

REF: LUSAKA 492

11. Information Minister Mike Mulongoti confirmed to local press that the GRZ was making preparations to receive 25,000 Zimbabweans fleeing the violence in South Africa. Mulongoti was responding to reports published by Agence France Presse (AFP) on May 26 which indicated the Red Cross Society was preparing to receive roughly 5,000 families in Zambia. According to press reports, these families are currently headed to Zambia via Botswana.

12. UNHCR Country Representative James Lynch and ConOff discussed the AFP reports on May 27. At that time, UNHCR expressed doubt as to the accuracy of this story and the imminence of such a large number of refugees. Subsequently, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Zambia issued a Note Verbale indicating that AFP misunderstood the comments made by their Southern Africa Zone head. According to the IFRC, "no record about people fleeing from Southern Africa to seek refuge in Zambia in great numbers has reached our office."

13. COMMENT: Post believes that Mulongoti may have been referring to GRZ, UNHCR, and IFRC contingency planning activities (Reftel) and his comments were designed to reassure the public that Zambia was ready for Zimbabwean refugees should they decide to come. Post will remain in contact with UNHCR and will update as additional information becomes available. END COMMENT

MARTINEZ